

## We Start With...

A two minute period of silence - a moment of peace.

## From the ‘Chair’

Our March meeting came to some useful decisions. At the AGM we heard that Ian Fleming, who has developed and looked after the Dunedin SoF website (<http://dsf.blogtown.co.nz/>) for a number of years, wishes to give up his role. There was no member present at the meeting willing to take on the job, but we agreed to talk to you, our wider newsletter audience, to see if there was someone who could help by continuing to manage our website. Please ring Ian in the first instance (489 8964) and then Alan Jackson (473 6947) if you would like to take the matter further. It would be a pity to see the web site lapse.

*Gretchen*

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## April Meeting

I am delighted to advise that Dr Greg Dawes, Associate Professor, Philosophy, and known to many of us, will talk at our April meeting on “Why do all cultures develop a religion?”

Greg asks “Is our tendency to believe in gods, spirits, and demons a mere by-product of our evolved cognitive capacities, or does religion offer some real advantage, either to individuals or groups?”

## Last Meeting

Our topic in March (a review of “Religion for Atheists’ by Alan de Botton) allowed for a good length of discussion in small groups. When it

came to ‘reporting back to the plenary session’ there was a mutiny. Some folk felt that matters traversed in their group were so valuable, deep and personal, that it was inappropriate to summarise the discussion for the rest of us. Those from another group agreed. As, in fact, did I. Whenever I am the person to give the group feedback I find it difficult to give a precis of a wide-ranging discussion and range of views. And when I hear someone else give feedback from my group, I am amazed at how two people can take such different messages from the one discussion.

I believe the greatest value of Sea of Faith is to allow us to hear ourselves say something we’ve never said (or even voiced to ourselves) before. Such statements should be held and honoured within the group. We will have no more plenary sessions at Dunedin Sea of Faith. Phew.

**Why do all cultures develop a religion?**

**Greg Dawes**

**Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> APRIL**

**Highgate Church buildings,  
Maori Hill**

**Tea and Coffee  
will be available from 3pm**

**The programme will start at  
3.30pm**

***Contribution - \$4***

## AGM

The AGM also discussed our meeting time. We meet on the fourth Thursday of each month. Until last September we met at 5 pm for a light meal with the meeting from 6 to 7.30 pm; since then we have met at 3 for a cuppa & biscuits, with the meeting from 3.30 to 5 pm. This is not suiting our members. After quite some discussion we have decided to propose meeting from 6 to 7.30 pm. A cuppa & biscuits will be available from 5.45 pm and throughout the meeting. We hope this will allow for the greatest range of needs to do with work commitments, other afternoon and evening meetings, and the need for an evening meal either before or after the meeting.

We propose to start this new time at our June meeting, but first we seek your views on whether this time is a good one for you, or whether you can see pitfalls you should know about. Please let Alan Jackson have your views at [alanjackson@xtra.co.nz](mailto:alanjackson@xtra.co.nz) or 473 6947.

## National Newsletter

Do you get the national Sea of Faith newsletter? For \$20 per year it provides (in full colour copy, posted) the most interesting reading by fellow members around the country. David Kitchingman's address to us last year on *The Meaning of Life* included 42 quotations, and these have been included in the March issue.

## Conference 2016

On the back page of the newsletter there is information about the 2016 SoF conference, to be held at a conference centre in Silverstream in the Hutt 7-9 October, and titled 'With or without God: Community in the post-theistic age'. Speakers include **Sir Lloyd Geering**, **Gretta Vosper**, a Canadian self-titled on her website 'minister, author, atheist', and author of '*With or without God, Why the way we live is more important than what we believe*', and **Michael Benedikt** from the USA (by skype conference),

talking about his book and thesis '*God is the good we do*'. This promises to be a very comfortable, interesting and invigorating conference. Put it in your diary now ☺

## 2016 Programme

It seems a good idea that about every second meeting should be run by members, with significant time for small group discussion. A book review works well, anything that takes a member's interest and has some good questions attached.

We are looking for topics/presenters for August and October.

**April 28** Greg Dawes "Why do all cultures develop a religion?"

**May 26** Marion Kitchingman "Vera Brittain: English nurse during WWI, notable author, feminist and pacifist: a dramatized reading".

**June 23** Meeting to celebrate Matariki: member contributions for discussion

**July 28** Najibullah Lafraie: Islamic Education

**August 25** Member contributions for discussion

**September 22** Simonne Samuelson: Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

**October 27** Member contributions for discussion

**November 24** Final meeting of the year: Member contributions on a chosen topic.

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